

thus to have picked out from his work the plums which are specially suited to our eugenic digestions. But the book is none the poorer. We have simply taken samples from an inexhaustible mine. The volume is packed from cover to cover with interesting, important and informative matter, presented in orderly and logical sequence and in a style at once dignified, scholarly and engaging, so that, while the matter holds the attention, the manner carries the reader smoothly along the pleasant pages. It is a book which cannot be too highly recommended to those who would understand the place of sex in the complex of social activities.

R. AUSTIN FREEMAN.

**Lynd, Robert S., and Merrell, Helen.**  
*Middletown in Transition. A Study in Cultural Conflicts.* London, 1937.  
Constable. Pp. xviii+604. Price 18s.

*Middletown*,\* which established the sociological reputation of the Lynds twelve years ago was a masterly study of a typical American small town in a time of prosperity. *Middletown in Transition* is the same town revisited and re-examined in a time of depression. The former study is now the "base line against which to analyse the broad changes of the dramatic ten years of boom and depression" between 1925 and 1935, during which a community of 50,000 individuals had to adapt itself to new and unforeseen situations, to sudden strains upon its institutions, to widespread dislocation of individual habits, and to the pressure of change from the larger culture surrounding it.

The plan of investigation follows closely that of *Middletown*. With insight and understanding based throughout on empirical observation, the authors show us the effect of the depression on the community by analysing in turn such matters as getting a

living, making a home, training the children, caring for the "unable," the use of leisure, the influence of the Church and Press, and the machinery of government. In addition a close-up is given of the town's dominant family to illustrate the industrial feudalism to which the community is subject, and a merciless dissection is made of the "Middletown Spirit," that is of the culture and rationalisations that justify that feudalism.

In both books the general conclusion arrived at was that economic changes were setting the pace for other institutional changes. During the depression the institutions caring for the "unable" leaped into lead. Education, leisure, and the relations among family members exhibited some changes, but local government, the Church, and general culture hardly any. "Basically, the texture of Middletown's culture had not changed." In spite of the fact that one out of every four families was on relief Middletown clung to its philosophy "that ordinarily any man willing to work can get a job" and that "economic conditions are the result of a natural order which cannot be changed by man-made laws." The crisis was met by reiterating more vociferously the old slogans and formulæ. It is true that fear and insecurity had entered for once into the lives of the dominant social group, but their "ideology" had not changed. Its analysis by the authors constitutes a fascinating and ominous chapter in human stupidity.

*Middletown in Transition* is in a way a misnomer, and the earlier study which had traced the growth of the community from 1885 to 1925 has much more right to this title. Middletown to-day is not so much in transition as in the actual grip of economic forces which it cannot resist. These are not local forces—they are changing the whole social structure of the U.S.A. They are the disappearance of the frontier, increasing social stratification, and the rise of trusts, combines and monopolies. No longer is it easy to climb the social ladder. The small business man is being pushed to the wall, and sections of the working class are beginning to question the economic order itself.

\* Lynd, R.S. and H.M. *Middletown: a Study in Contemporary American Culture*. London, 1929. Constable, Pp. 550, price 18s. 6d. *Eugenics Review*, 1929. XXI, 223.

A Middletown man speaking of the X family—the leading industrialists—said “If I’m out of work I go to the X plant; if I need money I go to the X bank, and if they don’t like it I don’t get it; my children go to the X college; when I get sick I go to the X hospital; . . . I buy X milk; I drink X beer; I vote for X political parties. . . . I listen to the word of God in X-subsidized churches; I read the news from the X morning newspaper. . . .”

The Lynds are of course not unaware of these forces and in a final chapter, “Middletown Faces Both Ways,” they discuss their implications for the political situation. They indicate that if the present tension continues big business may swing to the extreme right and that Middletown “will line up overnight behind a widely diverging *fait accompli* if the latter suits its deep emotional need for security.” But will the emotional security of the other classes be satisfied? The subtitle of this book—“A Study in Cultural Conflicts”—may well become a study in class conflicts.

This book inevitably invites comparison with its predecessor. *Middletown* was good. This book is infinitely better. The first was mainly descriptive. Now there is analysis and interpretation. The Lynds, it is evident, have matured sociologically. They have now a point of view—a philosophy to guide them through the labyrinthine complexity of social facts. They have begun to ask significant questions: Have class differences become accentuated? Are the working classes becoming politically conscious? From which groups may we expect Fascism? Or will America steer the middle of the road? Fortunately the Lynds do not adhere to their methodological assumption that Middletown, like some primitive tribe, can be studied in isolation. We cannot isolate Middletown from the U.S.A. or the U.S.A. from its hundreds of Middletowns. And this book, unlike the earlier study, does not merely mirror the life of a small Indiana town. It also throws light on those vast social, economic and political forces that are pulsing through the life of America to-day.

J. RUMNEY.

## POPULATION

**Ferenczi, Dr. Imre**, of the International Labour Bureau. *L'Optimum Synthétique du Peuplement*. Paris, 1937. Institut International de Coopération Intellectuelle. Société des Nations. Pp. 123.

THIS is an interesting study of the idea of an optimum population, largely from an international point of view. The author begins by remarking that contrasts between different densities of population have generally been considered a fertile cause of war, and he remarks that there are two main economic theories affecting the question, that of Malthus and the idea of the optimum. So long as populations were kept down by war, pestilence and famine, the necessity for a discussion of the problem could hardly arise, but matters changed with the improvement of public health and with the coming of the industrial revolution. The author remarks that Malthus's point of view was not only national and social, but also was international, and he attempted to judge the matter from both standpoints. However his chief doctrine has been completely falsified by events, especially by the discoveries of science in the service of production, though the law of diminishing returns did show itself in a modest fashion in agriculture.

But we are, in fact, in Europe generally, in a social system which assures a fair level of comfort to the workers, and the spectre of famine does not raise its ugly head. This is partly due to the restriction of births, which is itself the result of a rationalist mentality, the product of comfort and culture.

The optimistic nineteenth century did not much trouble itself about demographic problems, but from 1900 onwards nationalist and military circles have been disquieted by the fall in the birth-rate, and economists have been led to study the relations between density, social arrangements, and well-being. Dr. Ferenczi mentions Sismondi's saying that “The true problem of the statesman is to find the combination and the ratio of